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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Mazzini and Gramsci on international politics: an Italian approach?

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Abstract Commentators attempting to explain Italy often see many contradictions and peculiarities. Looking in particular at Italian political thought, they find personalities and rarely schools. Nonetheless, this essay will focus on the legacies of Mazzini and Gramsci. They are the most distinguished Italian personalities in the debate about modern international relations. They diverge on most arguments concerning the international as a political category and are rarely discussed together. Today's Mazzini is included in the debate about the conditions that justify international military interventions, while Gramsci is mainly discussed during considerations of the empowerment of subordinate workers. However, what unites them is the peculiarity of Italy placed halfway between the developed and underdeveloped worlds. In addition, the social and territorial amorphousness of Italy gave rise to the necessity of a process of remodelling and rethinking the role and form of politics beyond conventional institutional frameworks.

Keywords International relations theory · Liberal internationalism · Historical hegemonies · Mazzini · Gramsci

Introduction

Commentators attempting to explain Italy often see many contradictions and peculiarities. Looking in particular at Italian political thought, they find personalities and rarely schools. Indeed, Italy did not have a cultural centre and its fragmentation 'prevented the formation of a public space' (Negri 2009, p. 8). This paper will focus on

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the intellectual legacies of Mazzini and Gramsci. They are the most distinguished Italian personalities in the debate about modern international relations. They diverge on most arguments concerning the international as a political category. In Gramsci's writing, there is a critique of Mazzini's notion of religion and his lack of attention to social problems. In the history of political thought, the two thinkers are rarely found together. After all, Mazzini and Gramsci's legacies are very different and it is problematic to frame them within an Italian school of international politics. Today's Mazzini is included in the debate about the conditions that justify international military intervention, while Gramsci is mainly discussed for the description of successive historical hegemonies or during considerations of the empowerment of subordinate workers. However, there are arguments to ask whether a common approach to international politics arises and whether it is related to an Italian peculiarity. Both Mazzini and Gramsci call for universal liberation through voluntary relations between peoples, as the path to a global Renaissance. This common target leads them to accord centrality to national consciousness through people's awareness of international issues. What unites them, moreover, is the focus on the peculiarity of Italy, a country placed halfway between the developed and underdeveloped worlds.

This paper will attempt to include in a single framework the contributions to international politics of Mazzini and Gramsci. Without developing an Italian school, but explaining the fragmented nature of the Italian political thought, the main theoretical argument is that their intellectual legacies can be regarded as two specular as well as militant ways of practicing and theorizing the international. For this purpose, the paper presents a reading of Mazzini followed by a reading of Gramsci. This format may appear more like two entries of an encyclopaedia rather than two steps of an analytical approach. However, the analytical (if not methodological) strategy is to stress that Mazzini and Gramsci faced common issues in different times, ultimately placing the (Italian) people at the centre of international stage. Thus, I will critically discuss Wilsonianism and the so-called Italian school in the study of International Relations (IR), which are generally referred to Mazzini and Gramsci. Besides, I will argue that while Mazzini's legacy remains to be unravelled, the most original interpreter of today's Gramsci was the Italian scholar Giovanni Arrighi.

The legacy of Mazzini

Giuseppe Mazzini [1805–1972] was a leading figure of the Italian Risorgimento who became one of the most influential European public figures of the mid-nineteenth century. After a short time in prison, he spent most of his life in exile. Mazzini made a seminal contribution to the idea that each democratic nation has its own role to play in humankind's progressive development and inspired several patriotic and anti-colonial movements. Yet Mazzini's ideas of national self-determination reached their apogee after his death in the Versailles settlement of 1919. On the one hand, he is considered a pioneer of liberal internationalism, or what is known as Wilsonianism in the study of IR. He anticipated the idea that democracy within states would create the concrete conditions for lasting international peace and introduced the debate on the circumstances that justify international military intervention. On

the other hand, the thoughts of Mazzini had their roots in the peculiarity of the Italian context, and the issues he introduced are today the subject of a debate that goes well beyond Wilsonianism.

Divergent legacies?

The relationship between Mazzini and Italy is not easy to understand and, however, controversial. While influential in the European public sphere, he was regarded as a dangerous subversive in Italy during the Risorgimento and in the post-unification period. After his death, the democratic camp tried to get him admitted to the official pantheon of the national unification. Nevertheless, in the political landscape of both liberal Italy (from 1861 to 1922) and republican Italy (from 1946 onward) he did not become the master for any relevant political force or legacy. The most notable exception is a small group of European federalists.

In the early twentieth century, his conception of the nation was used by the fascist regime. The philosopher Giovanni Gentile constructed an image of Mazzini as the champion of the faith in the Italian national mission (Sullam 2015, pp. 89–93). This interpretation has been radically challenged, and nowadays, it is generally accepted that Gentile deliberately perverted the thoughts of Mazzini. However, with the exception of restricted circles Mazzini is not received with great enthusiasm and sympathy in contemporary Italy, as illustrated by Canfora (2014) who underlined that we are still looking for and to clarify his true ideas.

According to some scholars, there are two Mazzini: one British and one Italian. In 1830, after a short time in prison on charges of subversive activism against Austria's imperial rule, Mazzini left Italy and started to spend his remaining life in exile. From 1837, he chose London as permanent residence and, some years later, used the English language to express his views on the growing debate on democracy in Europe. By suggesting an ethical and progressive conception of democracy, Mazzini criticized the theories supported by the individualists and the communists. In particular, he participated with a starring role in the debate aroused by the publication of the Communist Party's Manifesto in 1846. Much of the enthusiasm and sympathy for Mazzini in Britain in the early 1850s was a reflection of the general support for Italian independence at that time. However, another reason was his frontal opposition to socialism and in particular to Marxist communism. According to Duggan (2008, p. 187), Mazzini is a difficult figure to situate in the landscape of European political thought because of 'his apparent hybridity […] his long association with British progressive circles meant that the illiberal elements of his thinking about the nation were often overlooked by commentators […]'. In other words, Mazzini's critique against socialist and communist ideas did not come from a very liberal and progressive position. Mazzini was largely English by adoption but, nonetheless, he remained an Italian thinker when his reflections went back to national issues. The path to Italian redemption was essentially religious and his view, Duggan (2008, p. 204) concludes, 'was not a liberal vision of the nation, and not surprisingly Mazzini had very little to say about constitutions and representative assemblies'.

The thesis of the two Mazzini is a clear example of the difficulty to explain Italian contradictions. The Italian patriot was not a systematic political thinker, and to some extent, his ideas remain in a generic rhetorical apostleship or ideological vacuum. Nevertheless, his originality lies precisely in his basic and not apparent hybridity, namely in an unresolved tension between his observations (from London) of what people actually did and his dreams about what they should have done in Italy.

Other scholars are more inclined to explain what can be regarded as the 'hybrid Mazzini'. According to Wight (2005, p. 90), for example, the Italian patriot was sociologically a Victorian, that is to say that he not only lived in London, as did many revolutionaries, 'but unlike them […] he became a part of English life'. On the other side, Mazzini remained an Italian literary romantic, more precisely an intellectual who belonged to 'the liberal Catholicism on the early nineteenth century, though out on the left wing' (Wight 2005, p. 92). Mazzini socialized in a leading world-city, a sort of forefront of scientific progress and economic power. However, he remained intellectually linked to his Catholic traditional roots. Wight (2005, p. 115) is very explicit to this regard: 'immersed though he was in his own age, he did not fully understand it; and if he has lasting values or interest, it is not because he was an interpreter of his time […] but because he drew his spiritual strength from timeless sources'. In other words, there would be a sort of short circuit in Mazzini's life: a bad connection, which prevented him from understanding what people actually did in his own age, provoking him to take refuge in his romantic world of dreams and moral certainties.

One can agree or not with this interpretation, but the question remains. Did combining his London-based socialization and the Italian tradition lead Mazzini to formulate original thoughts and ideas?

Wight (2005, p. 115) finally defined Mazzini as a 'traditionalist revolutionary', an expression that represents the quintessential nature of hybridity. This label is challenging, but has the problem of including a variety of meanings. What does it mean to be traditionalist and at the same time a revolutionary? Mazzini cannot be linked to the so-called conservative revolutionaries that, in the year following the First World War, rejected the industrial and urban civilization. He believed in humanity's progressive destiny, and in no way he can be considered an anti-modern thinker. His political theology was revolutionary and oriented towards the progressive future of peoples and societies. In 1871, for example, he strongly attacked the vanquished Paris Commune. Michael Bakunin, in turn, attacked him for his political theology. Nonetheless, the anarchist thinker felt obliged to mention that: 'If there is one man who is universally respected in Europe and whose more than 40 years of active, single-minded dedication to a great cause have really deserved that respect, it is Mazzini' (Bakunin 1973, p. 214).

The oxymoron derived by the combination between revolution and tradition is nonetheless useful. It can be unravelled as follows: the unresolved tension between observation and dreaming pushed Mazzini to think of the way progress and freedom, seen in one place, could be quickly established elsewhere. The belated nature of Italy, a traditional country with a revolutionary potential, was at the origin of the oxymoron from which Mazzini derived his thoughts and ideas.

As Benedetto Croce observed in 1932, the true greatness of the Italian patriot was having understood that freedom in Italy could flourish only through independent and national initiative. At the age of twenty-five, Mazzini chose to be exiled because he was convinced that the international crisis opened by the Paris Revolution of July 1830 would soon allow him to return to a free Italy. It was at the time of this choice, according to Croce (1993), that Mazzini saw in politics something more fundamental than policy-making, constitutions and representative assemblies. He realized the need to awake in men the feeling of universal principles and, as consequence, the duty that arises.

While still under the fascist regime, Croce published his famous *History as the Story of Liberty* that in the original Italian directly evokes Mazzini: *Storia come pensiero e come azione* [history as thought and as action]. Croce (1941, p. 219) was very explicit with regard to the role of tradition in Mazzini's thoughts: 'that truth which has been conquered by thought and has become certainty of that conquest, or faith, may rightly be called religious faith; hence Mazzini's formula "thought and action" has been called a religious formula, which it is'. In other words, in Croce's opinion the path to Italian redemption was essentially religious but not illiberal or conservative. Quite the contrary, in order to establish progress and freedom in Italy it was necessary to recall the power of religion as vehicle for political mass redemption.

The primacy of duties with respect to rights is the best-known argument of Mazzini's political thought (see *The Duties of Man* of 1860). Following Croce, I believe that this primacy is to be considered as a temporal one: the duty to promote national independence and self-determination as a means to human progress and rights; hence, it is not an illiberal pre-eminence of the nation over the individual.

Tradition emerges in Mazzini's political thought from his dreaming about the redemption of Italy while, at the same time, observing the European context from London. Indeed, it was in the city where many European revolutionaries lived that Mazzini developed his ideas about the religious and traditional foundation of politics and the potential for collective freedom contained in the principle of nationality and self-determination. In particular, he expounded his theories in a long article entitled *Thoughts Upon Democracy in Europe*, published in series by the *People's Journal* from August 1846. Moreover, at the beginning of 1847 Mazzini joined the People's International League. This organization, originally thought to promote a pro-European political line, became an alternative to international socialism for the promotion of democracy (Mastellone 2003). As already said, much of the enthusiasm and sympathy for Mazzini was a reflection of the general support for Italian independence, but also for his frontal opposition to socialism and Marxist communism in leading national liberation movements in Europe. This enthusiasm encouraged the dissemination of his theories around the world.

Mazzini's theoretical programme had an extraordinary appeal for generations of progressive nationalist leaders. He inspired patriotic and anti-colonial movements not only in Europe, but also in Latin America, the Middle East, India and even China. The revolutionary phenomenon was not intended by Mazzini as a calculated and planned event, namely the outcome of a realistic, scientific and long-range process. From a Marxist point of view, revolutions come when the time is ripe, and,

in this sense, the revolutionary phenomenon depends on objective social conditions recognized by the political forces. For Mazzini, on the other hand, national revolutions are similar to the forces of nature, controlled by human beings only if they know how to orientate this faithful and traditional power.

Mazzini's ideas of national self-determination spread from his day until the early twentieth century, reaching their apogee during the Versailles settlement of 1919. Having studied Mazzini's writings as a professor of international relations, Woodrow Wilson endorsed him during a visit to Genoa (Mazzini's birthplace) on the way to Versailles. As then president of the USA, Wilson stated that he was finally using ideas from Mazzini's principles. There is no doubt that liberal Wilsonianism originated from Mazzini (Recchia 2013).

However, it must be remembered that this legacy emerged in the debate on democracy in Europe and on the role of the People's International League. It was in this context that Mazzini tried to create a revolutionary organization to bring together all the independent or self-determined peoples. As we shall see in the next section, this original project greatly benefited from his hybridity. The belated nature of Italy in the European context was the starting point. Freedom in Italy could flourish only through a national initiative, but an international anchorage was also necessary. It was this perspective that later inspired the anti-colonial struggles and the related international movements. After all, independence in Italy occurred against the domination of a might European empire. For its part, Wilson's liberal idealism did not fully recognize this seminal point derived from 'difficulties in practice'.

Difficulties in practice

Mazzini's thoughts on international politics are more relevant than his ideas on national independence. They date back to 1835 and are in the French language. In *De la publicité dans le affaires extérieures*, he opposed the constitutive elements of diplomacy (such as secrecy and cunning) to the strengths of peoples in foreign affairs (that are publicity and frankness). Mazzini not only expressed criticism about secrecy and cunning in diplomacy, as Hugo Grotius and Immanuel Kant before him. He put publicity and frankness well beyond openness and transparency in order to rethink international relations. Mazzini (2009a, p. 175) wrote: 'All that would be necessary is for that people to combine their struggle with some active international propaganda effort'. He was addressing the Swiss people, but his arguments had general theoretical relevance. According to Mazzini, publicity and frankness in foreign policy were means for peoples to obtain independence in international affairs and international help.

An advocate of traditional diplomacy, such as Hans Morgenthau, could critically reply that 'this degeneration of diplomatic intercourse into a propaganda match is, then, the inevitable concomitant of the publicity of the new diplomacy' (Morgenthau 2006, p. 553). Mazzini would be in agreement with the content of this critique to Wilsonianism. According to Mazzini, international federation was a revolutionary project that could replace secrecy and traditional diplomacy with propaganda and public diplomacy. The divergent agreement between Mazzini and a realist thinker

such as Morgenthau is not surprising. Unlike Wilson, Mazzini realistically wrote on what men do, before on what they ought to do.

In the *Manifesto of Young Italy* of 1831, he had already stated, 'there is a class of men […] who imagine that revolutions are to be conducted with diplomatic caution […] rather than with the energy of an irrevocable faith […]. They believe that the peoples can be led to liberty by adopting the same cunning and artifice of the tyrants who enslave them' (Mazzini 2009b, p. 35). On the one hand, Mazzini was expressing the opposite point of view of the Count of Cavour, who thought that an incentive to Italy's national unification could emerge from the European major powers' support. On the other, Mazzini's ideas about foreign affairs were the outcome of his observation of the baseness, volubility and lubricity of politics. The path to political mass redemption of the Italians needed an internationalist project in opposition to the old diplomacy and in competition with the Holy Alliance of princes (namely with the Vienna settlement of 1815). Precisely, these ideas and the faith in publicity of diplomacy, international federation and moral duties were developed later in English.

As already said, in London Mazzini explained more widely and clearly his international thought against Marxism. During his journalistic activity and especially as London correspondent for the *New York Daily Tribune*, in same years Karl Marx had the opportunity to deal with international politics and issues related to the colonial policy of the British Empire. These interests were, however, always secondary to his general reflections on political economy, and in fact his major works not only did not present a theory of international politics, but the same relations between states were considered rather briefly. The international dimension or the conviction that capitalism was directed to spread to the whole planet was the background of the reasoning of Marx. However, his analysis was based on domestic revolutions, considered as conflicts between opposing classes. Marxist theories of imperialism would later attempt to offer a solution to the questions left by Marx on the final collapse of capitalism. Nevertheless, the debate took directions that were sometimes very different. With Mazzini, we can register a reverse trend compared to Marxism. His ideas on domestic revolutions and national self-determination remained in a generic rhetorical apostleship. On the contrary, his international thought registered a fruitful overture towards the theorizing of international politics. After all, his goal was to place the Italian people at the centre of international stage.

In the essay *Nationality and Cosmopolitanism* of 1847, published in the *People's Journal* of London, Mazzini elaborated his international thought reinterpreting the modern and eighteenth-century ideal of a peaceful international order. In the eighteenth century, Kant and other European democrats had outlined the idea of a voluntary federation of autonomous nations in a covenant of mutual assistance and cooperation. Mazzini developed this idea further by considering that democratic governments at the domestic level would not be sufficient for a more peaceful international order. In this advancement of his ideas, publicity and frankness remained relevant strengths for peoples. However, Mazzini's innovative perspective in London was based on something new, which is a radical interpretation of the analogy between individuals and states for the constitution of political order. According to

Mazzini (2009c, p. 62): 'It is not *individuals* who must sign the new pact; it is rather the free Peoples, with their own name, their ideal, and their moral conscience'.

Broadly speaking, the so-called domestic analogy represents a presumptive reasoning that holds that there are certain similarities between domestic and international phenomena. Historically, the domestic analogy has embraced two specific modes: 'the backward-looking tradition of a return to Roman or to Western Christian unity' and the forward-looking approach of Kant, which 'finds its sustenance in the belief in human progress, in the possibility of achieving in the future what has not been achieved in the past' (Bull 1966, p. 38). Mazzini's proposal for an international pact between peoples, as an alternative to anarchy, was a step forward. While maintaining a forward-looking view, Mazzini looked back to the past in contemplating a new version of liberal cosmopolitism. The products of Mazzini's analogical reasoning were that states actually do not only possess rights more or less as individuals do, but also duties and responsibilities to intervene in international affairs.

Modern liberal cosmopolitans oscillate between two poles: the optimistic noninterventionism of Kant on the one hand, and the messianic interventionism of Mazzini on the other. While both poles display elements of idealism and realism, the noninterventionist liberals were never able to cope with 'difficulties in practice', that is to say, according to Waltz (2001, p. 107): 'how can the nations improve internally while the international relations of the world remain on the old footing?'. Mazzini realistically saw the problem. As an Italian patriot in the middle of the nineteenth century, he could not escape it. 'The despotic powers', he stated in an address to the Council of the People's International League (1847), 'hurl their defiance at us:—"We shall rule, for we have the daring of Evil; we act, you have not the courage to stand up for good"'. 'Is it enough [he asked] to preach peace and nonintervention-ism, and leave Force unchallenged ruler over three-fourths of Europe […]?' (quoted in Waltz 2001, p. 107). Waltz relied on a short and fragmented selection of Mazzini's writings. Nevertheless, he immediately went straight to the point.

The end of the Napoleonic Wars generated changing circumstances in the domestic and international spheres upon the extent and manner in which the domestic analogy could be employed. This was the period in which liberalism made advances within the domestic sphere, while the international system underwent the logic of the Holy Alliance and the Concert of Europe. Since the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the conservative great powers had been openly supporting each other, sometimes using the military to crush popular uprisings. In particular, the Austria-Hungarian Empire had repeatedly intervened on the Italian peninsula to support its local vassal states in the face of uprisings. Only an Italian patriot could see this problem very clearly. The belated nature of Italy in the European context was essential to Mazzini's international thought. In his view, liberal states should have acquired not only the right but also the duty of counter-intervention: 'the absolute nonintervention doctrine in politics appears to me to be what indifference is in matters of Religion, namely: a disguised atheism. It represents the negation of all beliefs, of all general principles, of every mission of nations on behalf of Humanity' (Mazzini 2009d, p. 181). Mazzini spoke these words in 1845 to an influential Whig politician and British home secretary, in order to arouse sympathy for the Italian cause. But his arguments on nonintervention

and publicity would become of a more general theoretical relevance, remaining imperative still today.

Mazzini was not a crusading interventionist. The true greatness of the Italian patriot was having understood that freedom could flourish only through independent and national initiative. The idea that freedom and democracy should be exported through military intervention does not belong to Mazzini. As Stefano Recchia rightly argued, he opposed regime change achieved with the help of foreign regular armies and he justified direct military intervention only in two narrowly defined circumstances: 'first, as *counter-intervention*, to re-balance the situation on the ground during a popular revolt, when troops from another country have already intervened in support of local despot, and second, as *humanitarian intervention* to stop large-scale violence against ethnic or religious minorities' (Recchia 2013, p. 238). Nevertheless, references to theological terminology such as 'disguised atheism' or 'mission of nations' are not accidental or occasional. They reflect Mazzini's belief that an international pact between nations needed a political theology based on a revolutionary project.

In another essay in Italian, Mazzini recalled the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, the supreme exponent of that radical and moral change that Wight (2005, p. 151) defined 'the Cosmopolis'. Mazzini was assertive to this regard: 'In our century the idea of a collective and progressive life of the entire human species, which was first affirmed by Dante, has finally become accepted by all the greatest minds after long historical and philosophical studies. […] Just as citizens are the individual components of the nation, so nations are the individual components of humanity' (Mazzini 2009e, pp. 125–126). This backward-looking to Roman and Christian unity is an essential element of Mazzini's international thought. Just as the inspirers of the Holy Alliance of princes, whom proposed the principle of action based on dynastic legitimacy, so too Mazzini proposed an international pact whose values were no less theologically inspired, even though his intent was to defeat the dynastic principle.

This project goes beyond the Wilsonian rhetoric based on the primacy of justice and international law on power politics. As a political activist, Mazzini was aware that the struggle between conflicting principles is unceasing and that military interventions in international affairs would require a continuous revision of theoretical analysis. 'The theory of international politics, he wrote in 1851, can be perfected in no other way than by dealing sincerely and thoroughly with individual cases as they successively arise' (Mazzini 2009f, p. 218). Exactly for this reason, he saw the need to find a universal idea upon which the cosmopolitan model of the Holy Alliance of peoples could be established. Some years later in 1871, in an essay explicitly referring to international politics, Mazzini (2009g, p. 227) wrote: 'The science of international politics is actually simpler and less difficult than one might be led to think, as long as one relies on a few principles all derived from religion and the idea of Duty'. Shortly before, he had already clarified these principles: 'Nations are the individuals of Humanity; and all of them must work toward accomplishing their common *goal*. But each of them must do so according to their own geographical position, their own particular abilities, and the means that are naturally at their disposal' (Mazzini 2009g, p. 226).

In the Italian case, Mazzini (2009g) assigned to the young nation a sacred mission according to the imperial/papal legacy of Rome and a leading Mediterranean role related to its geographical position. One could dismiss this project as a fantasy of a dreamed Italian *télos*. It is not clear what the Italian mission should be and it is always possible to fall into the Gentile's trap. However, Mazzini's paternalistic endorsement of interventionism in the Mediterranean as an instrument of European civilizing mission proves that the inclusion of moral and universal duties in international politics can become a difficult task. For a European of the nineteenth century like Mazzini, a cosmopolitan programme could be reconciled with national missions in the same way that today some thinkers sincerely theorize about propositions such as 'humanitarian wars'. Since armed conflicts have reappeared in various forms to defend sovereignty, to protect human rights, in reaction to terrorist attacks, as preventive protection, as declared responsibility to protect populations, and so on, the contribution of Mazzini remains critical in addressing current issues of international politics. After the failures of exporting democracy to Islamic countries, the Western-centred idea of world order that followed the end of the Cold War is no longer at the core of the debate. Thus, the political legacy of Mazzini's interventionism is still *in itinere* and his intellectual legacy remains to be unravelled.

The legacy of Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci [1891–1937] was a former leader of the Italian Communist Party and was incarcerated in a fascist prison between 1926 and 1935. Most of Gramsci's work focused upon the analysis of national social formations. Inspired by Marx and Niccolò Machiavelli, Gramsci did not comment much on international politics. Nevertheless, some scholars of the so-called Italian school extended Gramscian ideas to the study of IR and, in particular, his notion of hegemony was adapted to problems of world order. The 'Italian school' lost much of the complexities of the thoughts of Gramsci and, above all, those related to his relationship with Italy. Moving on, the international thought of Gramsci can be framed through the interpretation provided by the Italian scholar Giovanni Arrighi [1937–2009]. While Mazzini's legacy remains to be unravelled, in my opinion Arrighi was the most original reviewer of today's Gramsci. He too had a special relationship with Italy, particularly concerning the economic and social crisis of the 1970s.

An Italian legacy?

According to Anderson (2016, p. 71), 'no Italian thinker enjoys a greater fame today than Gramsci'. Yet a sterilization of Gramsci's political legacy occurred in Italy, where his *Prison Notebooks* (1929–1935) became available doctrinally expurgated in the 1940s. The fragmentation of the most important of Gramsci's books resulted in a continuous instrumentalization for official purposes. In the beginning, Gramsci was considered a politician for whom ideas were nothing unless applied into practical decisions. This interpretation served to support the political line of the Italian

Communist Party. In the end, the self-liquidation of the same party generated a rethinking about Gramsci's communism, a phenomenon that Canfora (2007, p. 31) referred to as 'Communist self-revisionism'.

However, creative employment of Gramsci's thoughts migrated abroad. Scarcely available to non-Italian readers before the 1970s, the writings of Gramsci had a great international impact. In Britain, the debate was focused on the concept of hegemony. This intellectual legacy was based on the multi-dimensionality of Gramsci's approach to politics, a feature 'not only topical but spatial, since Italy combined an advanced capitalist industry in the North with an archaic pre-capitalist society in the South, and the Notebooks come from a direct experience of both, capable in another time of speaking to First and Third World readers alike' (Anderson 2016, p. 71).

Interest for Gramsci in Britain was induced by the works of non-British scholars working in British Universities such as Jamaican-born Stuart Hall, the Argentine Ernesto Laclau, and the Indian Ranajit Guha. In all these cases, the Notebooks were reinterpreted to continue intellectual discourse about political struggles within national social formations. About the same time, the Italian Arrighi developed the international vision of Gramsci connecting 'inter-state and intra-state plans of hegemony in a single framework' (Anderson 2016, p. 90). Arrighi's relationship with the British university system was different from the other scholars just mentioned. In the 1960s, the British were setting up universities throughout their former colonial empire. Arrighi successful applied for a position in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where he had the opportunity to experience the decolonization process. After a week in jail, in 1966 he moved to Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania, where many exiled national liberation movements, activists from the Black Power group in the USA, as well as scholars and intellectuals such as Immanuel Wallerstein were operating. After returning to Italy, in 1969 Arrighi was involved in the radical movement of students and workers that anticipated the economic and social crisis of Italy in the 1970s. As professor in Trento and then as a political activist of the extra-parliamentary left-wing in Turin, he developed the idea of finding a Gramscian strategy to relate to the movement. His organization, Gruppo Gramsci, elaborated the initiative of *autonomia operaia*, namely an intellectual autonomy of the working class from parties and unions. In 1978, he finally published *Geometry of Imperialism* where he argued that the Gramscian concept of hegemony could be more useful than the Marxist notion of imperialism in analysing dynamics of the interstate system.

Despite the fact that Gramsci's idea of hegemony was originally conceived to analyse class relations within national political jurisdictions, Arrighi reformulated the notion of hegemony to analyse interstate relations. In doing this, he introduced a geographical dimension of politics focusing on the position occupied by centres of power during successions of international hegemonies. As underlined by Anderson (2016, p. 95), 'building Gramsci's ideas outward from the national plan of classes to the international system of states, he transformed Gramsci's legacy more radically and creatively than anyone'.

Gramsci's Notebooks are the defining context of the notion of hegemony. In this book, Gramsci focused upon the relationship between politics and economics. He posed the question of what kind of fusion between the political superstructure and economic structure could be produced in any particular country. Gramsci tried to

answer by abandoning the conceptual Marxist couple structure/superstructure and introducing the concepts of hegemony and 'historical bloc' in order to analyse balances between national forces in any given country. He focused upon the open-ended contrast between political nationalism and economic cosmopolitanism, conceiving this contrast as a source of crisis. According to Femia (1981, p. 2), 'as an Italian Gramsci had additional reasons for rejecting 'scientific Marxism'. His Italy was a semi-developed country with deep internal differences between North and South'. Both objective material conditions (economics) and the influence of ideas (politics) had to be considered in order to establish human subjectivity as a core element of Marxism.

Gramsci's emphasis on ideas and cultural and intellectual factors in politics generated from the delay of Italian development. Furthermore, the traditional dichotomy between force and consent, which constituted the two components of Gramscian hegemony, was characteristic of the Italian political thought since Machiavelli. As a resource for supremacy, the notion of consent involves the cultural, intellectual and also moral leadership regulating the balance of political forces. According to Gramsci, those who are consenting must somehow be truly convinced that the interests of the dominant group are also those of society at large: 'undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that […] the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind' (Gramsci 1971, p. 161). This was particularly true, in the eyes of Gramsci, in a territory combining an advanced capitalist industry with an archaic pre-capitalist society.

During his time in Africa, Arrighi deemed the superiority of investigating this type of hegemony on a world scale rather than a national one, considering the importance of both the division of the world into central and peripheral areas and the social status (race, nation and gender) of the labour forces. A few years later in Italy, he began to deal with international politics. However, he remained in the analytical framework of Gramsci attributing a sort of primacy to national social relations. For Gramsci, indeed, the more the economic life of a nation is subordinate to international relations, the more a specific social bloc exploits the situation to maintain national hegemony. 'If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion […], then and only then […] can there take place […] the creation of the "historical bloc"' (Gramsci 1971, p. 418). Therefore, social changes originate from the domestic level, international relations follow social relations, and 'even the geographical position of a national State does not precede but follows (logically) structural changes [in the social structures], although it also reacts back upon them to a certain extent […]' (Gramsci 1971, p. 176).

Arrighi transformed this analytical framework in 1979, when he moved to the USA. He joined Wallerstein and Terence K. Hopkins as a professor of sociology at the Fernand Braudel Center at Binghamton University in New York. In that period, the Center attracted scholars from all over the world, becoming the core centre for world-system analysis. By adopting the world-system analysis, Arrighi gave more relevance to the geographical location of power than Gramsci had done. With his Gramscian vision, he felt confident in analysing capitalism within a longer period than that considered by traditional Marxists. World-system

scholars dated the beginning of capitalism to the end of the Middle Ages. Following this interpretation, Arrighi explored the potential of the Gramscian approach, focusing upon the accumulation of financial wealth and the hegemonic role of the elites. According to Gramsci, material needs are primary in human evolution not because humans must eat to live but because the satisfaction of these needs constitutes the engine of history. For him, force and consent are linked to the elite's ability to provide this satisfaction according to the peculiarities of any hegemonic dominant system: 'Consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production' (Gramsci 1971, p. 12). Developing these ideas, Arrighi argued that developments and the crisis of capitalism never coincide with the end of a mode of production, but with its transformation that in turn coincides with a shift of the geographical hegemonic centre of economic development.

According to Arrighi, there is a clear geographical dimension to the recurrent cycles of material and financial expansion. Capitalism is a mode of accumulation of wealth for the elite, and not, as in Marx's case, a mode of production related to the industrial revolution. Therefore, capitalism is marked by a succession of different hegemonic cycles whose tendency is to spread to the whole planet, as Marx understood by observing the phase of the industrial revolution. What kind of shift between hegemonic centres occurs? What are the territorial peculiarities of the hegemonic dominant systems? In asking these questions, Arrighi benefited from the world-systems analysis and creatively reinterpreted Gramsci's Notebooks and his legacy.

To a certain extent, Arrighi did in New York what Gramsci could not since he was in a fascist prison and with few resources available. The major premise of Gramsci's Notebooks is that objective material interests are not automatically or inevitably translated into class-consciousness. In contrast to the mainstream perception of Marxist analysis, Gramsci understood that political action is based on hegemony. However, there is a conceptual vagueness in the Notebooks. The same notion of hegemony is one of those fashionable political catchwords often invoked but with different meanings. Just as Gramsci considered *The Prince* of Machiavelli a 'living book', Arrighi considered the Notebooks as a work in progress, open to reinterpretation. The research programme of the Notebooks was based on the need to establish primarily a valid analysis of hegemonic crisis. While the international communist movement based its policy on the theory of the general crisis of capitalism, Gramsci understood capitalism and economic crises as more complex historical processes. In his *Quaderno 22* (*Americanism and Fordism*), he wondered whether the US industrialism represented a new step of the human evolution in the process of expanding capitalism worldwide. From the 1980s, many IR scholars agreed that Gramsci's thoughts could be investigated on a world scale focusing on US hegemony. Among them, Arrighi was the only one able to refine and develop Gramsci's theory of crisis. As we shall see, he did this by placing the peoples at the centre of the international stage and by reconsidering their geographical locations in the centre–periphery divide. Just as the hybrid Mazzini became creative by clashing with difficulties in practice, the Gramsci's legacy gained relevance in New York when Arrighi explored 'hegemonies in practice'.

Hegemonies in practice

In 1993, the British scholar Stephen Gill introduced the brand 'Italian School' with some irony: 'the term "Italian School" was coined by an anonymous reviewer' (Gill 1993, p. 21). However, Gill was seriously proposing a book of selected essays on Gramsci with the ambitious goal of linking IR and International political economy (IPE). Among the essays of his edited book, there was an original article proposed by Arrighi in addition to a reprinted article written by Robert Cox 10 years before. In this latter, Cox (1993, p. 62) had considered hegemony at the international level not merely as 'an order among states' but as 'an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production'. Accused of being an attempt to normalize Gramscian orientation within the IR mainstream, this proposal received several criticisms despite the broad appreciation it had received initially. As underlined by Worth (2011), for example, a sort of Coxian ontology emerged from the 1990s within the narrow sub-discipline of IPE. The problem with this strand of the 'Italian school' is that hegemony was not considered as a fluid, complex process. It was reformulated within a static structured approach. The nexus between world orders, forms of state and social forces (or modes of production) prevailed over other relevant mechanisms identified by Cox himself (for example, the role of universal norms expressed in international organizations).

For his part, Arrighi contributed to Gill's book with a different approach focused upon hegemonic cycles in the history of capitalism. The following year, his essay became the first chapter of the seminal book *The Long Twentieth Century* (1994), which opened a trilogy of Arrighi's works that includes *Chaos and Governance* (1997) and *Adam Smith in Beijing* (2007). The inclusion of Arrighi in the book of the 'Italian School' is certainly ironic. As Mazzini in London, Arrighi lived in the most important centre of what the geographer Jean Gottman considered the 'global megalopolis', which is the urbanized Northeastern USA from Boston to Washington D.C. (in 1998 Arrighi moved to Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore). The Italian scholar developed the ideas of Gramsci in the region where, according to Gramsci, capitalism was definitively expanding worldwide. However, the fact that he was an Italian, who had previously experienced the economic and social crisis of Italy in the 1970s, is not to be underestimated.

Arrighi radically and creatively refined Gramsci's intellectual legacy through his attempt to retrace in reverse the writer's mental processes. In Arrighi's opinion, indeed, Gramsci had metaphorically used the term hegemony 'to clarify relations between social groups through an analogy with relations between states' (Arrighi 1994, p. 29). After half of century, it was necessary to do the opposite and bring back the concept of hegemony in the analysis of relations between states. The use of Gramsci's notion of hegemony in the study of international relations was not only a correct task, but also a necessary move to overcome the fragmentation of Gramsci's writings. The critical question posed by Germain and Kenny (1998, p. 17)—'can Gramsci's notion of hegemony, especially where it rests on developments within the sphere of civil society, sustain its explanatory power outside of the national social context within which it was developed?'—received more than an affirmative answer by Arrighi.

The opportunity to work at the Braudel Center in New York was a decisive factor in this process. Indeed, according to Gramsci (1971, p. 350) 'every relationship of "hegemony" is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and worldwide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations'. Arrighi was aware that taking this tantalizingly idea and bringing back the Gramscian concept of hegemony in IR was a very difficult task. As a matter of fact, hegemony accrues to a dominant group by virtue of its capacity to lead society in a direction that is perceived by subordinate groups as serving a more general (that is, national) interest. Looking at international hegemony, 'the general interest cannot be defined in terms of an increase in the power of an individual state over others, because by definition this power cannot increase for the system as a whole' (Arrighi 2007, p. 150). Arrighi was aware that it was difficult to define hegemony at the international level, because general interest cannot be global in the absence of a world state. However, he found the solution using the world-system analysis. According to Arrighi, in the case of systemic chaos and crisis the demand for international order can be considered more and more general among national rulers. Thus, the elite of the state in the position to satisfy this system-wide demand for order has 'the opportunity of becoming world hegemonic' (Arrighi 1994, p. 30). For this purpose, its geographical location is not of secondary importance.

In his trilogy of works, Arrighi identified four systemic cycles of accumulation in the history of global capitalism. According to Arrighi (2009, p. 93), hegemonic forces are those best positioned to find a spatial fix between the capitalist and the territorial logic of power. Territorial rulers tend to increase their power by expanding the size of their container. Capitalist rulers, in contrast, tend to increase their power by piling up wealth within a small container and increase the size of the container only if it is necessary for the accumulation of power. The medieval Italian city-states accumulated a huge amount of capital in tiny containers, while seventeenth-century Netherlands were more than a city-state but less than a national state. Moving on, nineteenth-century Britain was an insular multinational state with a globe-encircling tributary empire and, in the twentieth century, the USA found a perfect harmony of territorialism and capitalism in a continent-sized nation-state with a world-encompassing system of transnational corporations, military bases and institutions of world governance. 'As this progression shows, concluded Arrighi (2007, p. 235), none of the agencies that have promoted the formation and expansion of world capitalism correspond to the mythical national state of political and social theory'. For him, historical hegemonic powers have been able to satisfy the demand for international order combining the territorial/nationalist logic of power with the capitalist/cosmopolitan logic of economy.

Arrighi formulated a theory of international hegemony in order to figure out the potentialities of masses of people on the international stage. Gramsci's focus on hegemony intended not only to explain hegemony and crisis, but also to furnish solution to the gap between Marxist theory and the potentialities of the working class. To this regard, Gramsci supported a 'war of position' or active resistance on the cultural front, namely a reversal of hegemony as a precondition of successful revolution: 'The war of position calls on enormous masses of people to

make huge sacrifices; that is why an unprecedented concentration of hegemony is required' (Gramsci 2007, p. 109). Arrighi empowered the Gramscian theory, but he did not explain whether hegemonic reversal remains an internal matter, restricted to the national forces, or becomes an international one. In his book with Hopkins and Wallerstein of 1989, the birth of new social movements was considered as the response to the global spread of capitalism in the form of passive resistance on the part of subordinate workers, regardless of the level of national class-consciousness (Arrighi et al. 1989). This Gramscian interpretation allowed the three scholars to include gender and ethnicity as relevant factors in the global division of labour across political jurisdictions. Furthermore, US hegemony was seen as definitely eroded from the 1970s without any reassuring state or agency able to replace it. This last topic was developed many times by Arrighi and in particular in his last book, when he wondered about a possible hegemonic shift in the direction of China and East Asia. Nevertheless, the conclusions of this book remained very unclear on the crucial point of how a passive resistance can be turned into active resistance. The same references to Gramsci remained in the background of his last book, since Arrighi focused on Marx versus Adam Smith in accordance with the legacy of the world-system approach.

Other IR scholars have dealt with the relationship between globalization and resistance in Gramscian terms. According to Rupert (2003), for example, the understanding of the potential for productive political dialogue between social identities not reducible to class needs a Gramscian conceptual vocabulary. In the production of global politics, a counter-hegemonic historical bloc is not homogeneous in the sense of annihilation of meaningful political difference. Resistance to globalization took the form of transnational confluence of movements for global justice and peace. Gramsci's counter-hegemonic bloc may be understood as homogeneous only to the degree that it develops a common rejection of capitalism. Once this rejection developed from within popular common sense, global homogeneity will prevail transforming the international system 'by new forms of social self-determination' (Rupert 2005, p. 494). Rupert was fully aware that Gramsci's vehicle for the realization of this kind of transformation was the historical bloc led/educated, initially at least, by a class-identified political party (the new Machiavellian Prince). Nevertheless, he remained confident that a worldwide passive resistance could be turned into an international active resistance thanks to the construction of the 'common sense'. Focusing on social rather than national self-determination, Rupert proposed something similar to Mazzini's mass redemptions but in the condition of international political economy.

Unlike Rupert, Arrighi focused upon the issue of hegemonic crisis and power shifts within the interstate system. He developed Gramsci's interest for the novelties of capitalism and global crisis. In *Quaderno 22*, the modernization of the productive forces was a fundamental issue for Gramsci in order to understand the potentialities of the working class. For him, the solution to the problem could not come without considering the developments of the global crisis. To this regard, 'Americanism' expressed the most advanced form of capitalist challenge capable of integrating innovation and restoration. For his part, Arrighi focused upon China and the Sino-American relations. According to him, there is an analogy between the Chinese

diaspora and the role of the Genoese business diaspora at the beginning of capitalism in medieval Italy (Arrighi et al. 1999). Already under Mao, Chinese relation with the Chinese diaspora closely resembles 'the relation of political exchange that sixteenth-century Spain and Portugal entertained with the Genoese capitalist diaspora' (Arrighi 2007, p. 359). In its long-lasting relation with this global diaspora, the Chinese government has always retained the upper hand, itself becoming one of the main creditors of the USA. Arrighi concluded that what is very difficult to assess is whether the Chinese government is in the process of becoming a committee for managing the common affairs of the national elite, or whether China has embarked on a post-hegemonic course of economic development. In this second case, the Chinese ascent could be taken as the harbinger of greater equality and mutual respect among peoples and civilizations.

Conclusion

Where the modern French, German and Anglo-Saxon political thinking arises in Europe from the need to define an order alternative to conflict or natural chaos, the Italian one has usually perceived order as starting from conflict, turning the latter into positive and constructive force. Of course, there are many differences between the intellectual legacies of Mazzini and Gramsci. Combining Machiavelli and Marx, Gramsci is the only one who represents that 'living thought' [*pensiero vivente*] which goes, according to Esposito (2016), from the medieval time to our days and in which political conflict can be mediated but not overcome. Gramsci worked from a Machiavellian premise, one that accounts for force and consent as observable attributes of human beings and not for a priori goals imposed by God or nature. According to Femia (1981, p. 13), the distinguishing characteristic of Italian political thinkers from Machiavelli to Gramsci is not the state but the dismissal of transcendence.

The thesis about the dismissal of transcendence cannot be extended to Mazzini. This difference is much more relevant than the one that sees Mazzini and Gramsci on two opposite fronts with respect to Marxism. Indeed, Mazzini's political programme diverges with Gramsci's political programme since this latter had a vision of life proved to be sincere and true not by conforming to a fixed standard to-reach (Mazzini's democracy and international federation), but by developing ideas towards a post-hegemonic international society to-come. To this regard, having the opportunity to develop Gramsci's international thought, Arrighi can be considered the main interpreter of his contribution to international theory. Mazzini's thoughts are very different from those of Gramsci or Arrighi. However, the political legacy of Mazzini is still open to reinterpretation, especially if we consider outdated his political theology with respect to current problems of military international intervention.

Despite the fact that Mazzini cannot be included among the heirs of Machiavelli, there are many reasons to associate his name to that creative Italian difference which finds inspiration in conflict. The delay of Italy as a modern liberal democracy (what historians and political scientists refer to as *ritardo storico*) has been a political opportunity for critical and creative thinking. Given the belated nature of the country, Italian elites have traditionally seen foreign policy as an instrument to secure

the state and import European/Western models for development (Diodato and Niglia 2017). Quite to the contrary, creative Italian differences have found inspiration in the peculiarity of Italy, placed halfway between the developed and underdeveloped worlds. From this perspective, it is worth noting that Mazzini endorsed military interventions abroad in order to support popular revolts and stop violence against minorities, rather than to promote democracy and regime change under the guise of humanitarianism. His essential contribution was to popularize the idea of nationhood as the vehicle for human freedom and social peace. At the same time, this was the basis of his revolutionary approach on the moral duty of states and international federation. In Mazzini's view, liberal states should acquire the right and the duty of counter-intervention in order to support a global Renaissance of peoples.

There is not an 'Italian school' of IR if that means, as for the 'English school', a 'conception of IR' (Buzan 2014, p. 6). The 'English school' had a reasonable beginning in 1959, when the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics first met as a self-selected group of scholars. The British Committee was a club with a clear set of participants that became a network of scholars. From 2003, the 'English School' even turn into an organized presence at IR conferences. Nothing like this happened in Italy. In this paper, however, I have described an intellectual living input that revolves around the peoples and multitudes in the international stage. Against the social and territorial amorphousness of Italy, both Mazzini and Gramsci felt it mandatory to remodel and rethink conventional roles and institutional forms of politics and international relations (territorial sovereignty, representative government, decision-making). In my opinion, the originality of Mazzini and Gramsci's contributions to international politics found inspiration in the belated nature of Italy, exploiting the advantages of its backwardness in order to develop a creative thinking.

Beyond Wilsonianism and the so-called Italian school in the study of IR, the Italian approach of Mazzini and Gramsci can be framed as follows:

1. International politics is a potential instrument for universal liberation through voluntary relations between peoples, and therefore, national consciousness through people's awareness of the international is a critical matter (Mazzini and Gramsci's legacies).

This frame can contribute to clarifying many international topics. For example, it can help to understand and problematize the up-to-date topic of populism in foreign policy. Generally, scholars believe that populist foreign policies reflect right-wing preoccupations with popular sovereignty facing the global governance. However, the specific foreign policy positions of the so-called populists can differ depending on ideological profile, regional setting, and people's awareness of the international.

2. The potential for a global Renaissance of peoples can be found historically since both the influence of ideas and material conditions are relevant with regard to human subjectivity and geographical shifts of hegemonic centres (Gramsci's legacy)

3. The problem of peace and war in international politics concerns the conditions that justify international military intervention during armed civil conflicts and popular revolts (Mazzini's legacy).

These concluding frames are interconnected since they involve two fundamental topics of current international politics. In the first case, at issue is the rise or awakening of the global South. This topic includes conflicts between the growing national elites in emerging countries, on the one side, and counter-hegemonic transnational forces, on the other. At the same time, it includes the wide-ranging relations between the North and the South, which are facing problems of global governance. In the second case, at issue are the conditions that justify international military intervention beyond Western humanitarianism. In particular, this topic concerns concrete problems of troops from countries supporting despots and large-scale violence during popular revolts in specific regions or geographical contexts.

Note: The citations of Mazzini are always from the translation provided by S. Recchia in *Cosmopolitanism of Nations* since this text collects all his writings on international issues. The citations of Gramsci are from the two major anthologies of *Prison Notebooks* translated into English.

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